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1968/12/28



Department of State **TELEGRAM**

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ACTION COPY

O P 280940Z DEC 68 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6740 1968 DEC 28 AM 8:19

INFO RUFNCR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 3346

STATE GRNC

BT

~~SECRET~~ SAIGON 45710

~~NODIS/HARVAN/PLUS~~

~~PARIS FOR VN MISSION~~

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 91-506

By WJG NARA, Date 2-12-92

1. IN MY TALK WITH THIEU THIS MORNING, HE SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO TALK A LITTLE ABOUT QUESTIONS OF SUBSTANCE, HOW THESE MIGHT COME UP AFTER PROCEDURES ARE SETTLED, AND HOW THEY MIGHT BE HANDLED IN A VERY PRELIMINARY AND TENTATIVE WAY. (HE SAID THAT KY HAD REPORTED TO HIM DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY AND TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL YESTERDAY, AND WHAT FOLLOWS MAY HAVE BEEN STIMULATED BY KY'S REPORT.)

2. WOULD HANOI WANT TO TIE A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT TO WITHDRAWAL? THIEU SAID HE BELIEVED HANOI'S STRATEGY IN PARIS WOULD BE TO TRY TO OBTAIN RECOGNITION OF THE NLF AS EQUAL TO SAIGON AND TO INSIST ON A PACKAGE SOLUTION. HANOI MAY BE WILLING TO TALK, AFTER MUTUAL WITHDRAWAL, TO SAIGON ABOUT NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. REUNIFICATION, ETC., BUT WILL WANT TO BE SURE WHAT WE (GVN) WILL GIVE TO THE NLF; IN OTHER WORDS, THEY WOULD NOT WANT TO "ABANDON THE CHILD IN THE MARKET PLACE."

3. THERE ARE, THEREFORE, TWO SEPARATE PROBLEMS: 1) INVASION OF SOUTH VIETNAM BY THE DRV WHICH MUST BE SOLVED BY THE WITHDRAWAL OF NVN TROOPS FOLLOWED BY ALLIED WITHDRAWAL UNDER THE TERMS OF THE MANILA COMMUNIQUE, AND 2) THE SITUATION OF THE NLF BEFORE AND AFTER NVN WITHDRAWAL.

4. IN THE CASE OF WITHDRAWAL, THIS WILL INVOLVE NOT ONLY THE WITHDRAWAL OF MAIN FORCE UNITS, BUT THE MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEM OF IDENTIFYING AND WITHDRAWING NVN IN VC UNITS, THE PROBLEM OF LAOS AND CAMBODIA, AND OF VERIFICATION AND SUPERVISION. THIEU EXPRESSED THE POSSIBILITY THAT SINCE HANOI WOULD NOT AGREE TO ADMIT TO WORLD OPINION THAT THEY HAVE HAD TROOPS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, THEY MIGHT WANT TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM OF WITHDRAWAL CONFIDENTIALLY ON A BILATERAL BASIS WITH US, AGREEING TO "FADE AWAY" SO THAT WE COULD THEN ALSO WITHDRAW.

5. ON THE QUESTION OF THE NLF, THIEU FORESAW THREE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS: 1) COALITION; 2) A GENERAL ELECTION BEFORE

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-2- SAIGON 45710, DECEMBER 28 (NODIS/HARVAN/PLUS)

1971 (THE DATE UNDER THE CONSTITUTION WHEN THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION WOULD BE HELD) IN WHICH THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WILL DETERMINE THE MAKE UP OF THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT ON THE BASIS OF ONE MAN, ONE VOTE: 3) AUTHORIZE THE NLF MEMBERS ~~TO~~ ORGANIZE A NON-COMMUNIST POLITICAL PARTY UNDER THE CONSTITUTION AND ENGAGE IN LOCAL AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS AS THESE WERE SCHEDULED (FOR EXAMPLE, ONE THIRD OF THE SENATE IS TO BE ELECTED IN 1970 AND OTHER LOCAL ELECTIONS MAY TAKE PLACE BEFORE 1971).

6. THIEU OBSERVED THAT THE FIRST ALTERNATIVE, I.E., COALITION, THE GVN COULD NOT ACCEPT, BUT THAT THE OTHER TWO OFFERED POSSIBILITIES. HE RATHER LEANED TOWARD EARLY GENERAL ELECTIONS ON THE GROUND THAT IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEIOUS TO THE GVN TO HOLD ELECTIONS BEFORE GIVING THE NLF TOO MUCH TIME TO ORGANIZE, WHICH THEY WERE ALREADY TRYING TO DO THROUGH EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH LIBERATION COMMITTEES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THIEU SAID, (HE HAD EXPRESSED THE VIEW AS LONG AGO AS 1965 THAT ONCE THE GVN BECAME STRONG, THEY COULD ABSORB THE NLF INTO THE BODY POLITIC. HE THOUGHT THE GVN WAS APPROACHING THE POSITION NOW WHEN "THE SYSTEM COULD ABSORB SOME BACTERIA" AND THAT BY THE TIME A SETTLEMENT MIGHT BE REACHED IN 1969, THEY WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO DO THIS. AS CONTINUING PREPARATIONS FOR SUCH A SITUATION, THE GVN WOULD EMPHASIZE STRONGLY IN 1969, ALONG WITH PACIFICATION AND REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT, THE CONSOLIDATION AND STRENGTHENING OF HAMLET AND VILLAGE ADMINISTRATIONS AND A DRAMATIC LAND REFORM PROGRAM. THIS LATTER, THE CABINET WAS ACTIVELY WORKING ON NOW AND HE HOPED TO ANNOUNCE SOMETHING SHORTLY.

7. AT THE END OF OUR DISCUSSION, HE REFERRED TO A MATTER HE HAD MENTIONED ONCE BEFORE TO ME, I.E., THE NEED ON THE PART OF THE US IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC OPINION TO WITHDRAW SOME TROOPS IN 1969. HE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW OUR VIEWS IN ORDER TO DISCUSS WITH US HOW FURTHER VIETNAMIZATION OF THE WAR COULD BE WORKED OUT, WHAT THE NATURE OF THE WITHDRAWAL MIGHT BE, AND HOW THE GVN WOULD FILL THE GAP. IF, FOR EXAMPLE, WE PLANNED ON WITHDRAWING SAY 100,000 TROOPS, WHAT WOULD BE THE NATURE OF THE WITHDRAWAL? WOULD THIS BE APPORTIONED ON A BASIS OF SAY 50,000 LOGISTICAL TROOPS AND 50,000 COMBAT TROOPS? HE SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO PURSUE THIS QUESTION WITH US ON A VERY SECRET AND SECURE BASIS.

~~BUNKER~~
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